Getting Technical with TV&C…

Guidelines for Successful Written Exam Administration

Monograph Overview

The purpose of this monograph is to provide a general outline of helpful guidelines for efficient and consistent exam administration. Considerations concerning exam materials, equipment, and the exam site are discussed. Guidelines concerning the actual administration of the exam are also presented. Finally, recommendations for maintaining exam security are presented throughout the monograph.

Why Be Concerned about Exam Administration?

Most test developers and personnel employees involved in selection will agree that a great deal of work, time, and resources are spent creating an effective and job-related exam. For example, a commonly used and accepted test development strategy involves several meetings between job incumbents, first-line supervisors, and test developers in order to create a comprehensive job analysis. Test items based on the job analysis content are then developed. These items are subject to scrutiny and are carefully analyzed for clarity, job-relatedness, grammar, and conformance to professionally accepted item writing principles. All of these efforts and resources are wasted if an exam is improperly administered and/or exam security is compromised. In addition, test takers need to

have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Consistent exam administration practices will ensure that all candidates are afforded the same opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications through participation in the exam process.

The Right Tools: Exam Materials, Equipment, Facility, Proctor-Candidate Ratio, Proctor Training and Instructions

Exam Materials and Equipment
After photocopying or receiving exam booklets from the test developer, it is important to examine each booklet for missing pages, poorly printed or copied pages, and proper order of pages. These checks reduce or eliminate unnecessary questions and interruptions during the exam process. For exam security reasons, each exam booklet should have a unique number that candidates write on their answer sheet.

The following is a list of items that should be taken to the exam site to ensure the proper flow of the exam administration.

1. proctor instructions
2. a list of candidates
3. a sufficient number of exam booklets and answer sheets for the size of the candidate group expected and a few extras in the event that some are defective. *(Note: All exam*

booklets should be counted before and after the exam administration.)

4. pencils (two per candidate plus extras)
5. scratch paper (if it is to be provided)
6. timing devices
7. a copy of the exam notice sent to the candidates
8. scotch tape and door signs (e.g., test in progress sign, sign indicating location of the test, etc.)

Helpful equipment to pack might include a stapler, paper/binder clips, different colored pens (to check off candidate names for each exam session), a microphone (if not at exam site), and an electric pencil sharpener or extra pencil leads.

The Exam Facility
Before using a new exam facility the proctor needs to examine the site *ahead of time* (not the morning of the exam) for possible characteristics which may negatively impact the exam process. The following facility characteristics should be considered when examining a new facility:

- acoustics
- seating capacity
- adequate lighting
- exits/bathroom locations
- accessibility for disabled candidates
- noise level of activities which may occur in the near vicinity during the exam time (e.g., construction, sporting events, concerts, etc.)
- ventilation and temperature of exam room
- needed facility resources (e.g., microphone, overhead, video, LCD, etc.)

Proctor-Candidate Ratio
When determining the proctor-candidate ratio it is important to consider the size of the group, the complexity of the exam, the experience of assigned proctors, the probability of cheating due to seating arrangements, the history of cheating at the facility, and the familiarity of candidates with the exam format. Typically when using multiple proctors, one is designated as lead (or chief or head) and has primary responsibility for exam administration.

A general rule of thumb is 1 proctor to 30 candidates. A ratio greater than 1 to 50 should not be used.

Proctor Training
It is highly recommended that all examination administrators receive proctor training which covers all areas of the testing process (e.g., facility inspection, examination distribution, monitoring, collecting, security precautions, etc.). As a general note, before the actual examination administration, it is essential that measures are taken to ensure the proctor has no relatives or friends taking the examination.

Proctor Instructions
Proctors should have clearly typed and detailed exam instructions which are to be read verbatim to candidates. The instructions should include an announcement at the start of the exam including proctor introduction, stating the name and length of the exam and how and when candidates will be notified of their results. The instructions should then provide details concerning the exam (e.g., no talking, scratch paper policy, restroom location, etc.). Instructions should also include a list of exam materials that each candidate should have including any permitted exam aids, such as calculators, books, notes, etc. Finally, detailed instructions concerning the proper method for filling out the answer sheets, as well as directions for each exam component, should be clearly written. As described below, it is critical that the proctor instructions be clear, complete and read verbatim.

The Four "C's" of Proctor Instructions
To ensure exam reliability, it is essential to administer exams and instructions under controlled and standardized conditions. For example, suppose one exam group has a proctor who reads instructions quickly and addresses only some points while a second exam group has a proctor who reads the instructions slowly, clearly, and verbatim. The "instructions factor" may contribute to misunderstandings and possibly lower scores for the first group. To minimize the

possibility of introducing this type of error, instructions must be *clear, complete, concise, and consistent* for all exam groups.

The Right Process: Administration of Exam

A successfully administered exam functions to maintain its validity and reliability.   It also gives candidates the perception of fairness and feelings of satisfaction with the exam process.   This section describes steps to follow to ensure administration success.   This process can be readily adapted to virtually any assembled exam administration.

Admitting the Candidates to the Exam
Candidates should enter and leave the exam room through a single check-in point staffed by one or more proctors.   Candidates should be required to present photo identification and their exam notice at the check-in table. The proctor should document any candidate who does not provide proper photo identification or a notice and follow departmental policy regarding the admittance of candidates lacking proper identification.

Seating of the Candidates
As candidates enter the exam room, one or more proctors should direct the candidates to sit in every other seat (or two per eight-foot table). Candidates should be seated in alternating rows to prevent cheating.   One or more proctors should be walking between the rows while candidates are being seated to ensure they are taking their designated seats and are not talking to each other.

Distribution of Exam Materials
There are two common methods for distributing exam materials, which typically consist of the test booklet, an answer sheet, pencils, and scratch paper, if it is needed.

1.   Once candidates have been seated, exam materials can be distributed. During distribution, candidates should be instructed not to open their test booklets or write on the answer sheet until they are told to do so. One or more proctors (who are not distributing

materials) should be walking through the candidate seating area during distribution to ensure candidates are not opening their booklets, marking their answer sheets, etc.

2.   Exam materials can also be distributed before candidates arrive at the exam facility. In this case, direct candidates to take seats where exam materials are located.

Monitoring Test Takers
Once the exam begins, proctors should walk around the exam room (or assigned area) several times during the course of the exam in order to monitor test takers for cheating and ensure test takers are properly marking their answer sheets. It is crucial that proctors have a predetermined plan or policy for dealing with disorderly and/or cheating candidates.

Use of Books, Calculators, and Other Aids
Proctors should review the proctor's instructions and exam materials to determine which exam aids are permitted in the exam.   Candidates who bring exam aids (e.g., calculators, dictionaries, reference books), which are specifically forbidden by the test instructions, should be instructed to place these materials on the floor under their chairs until the test is completed.

Closing the Exam Room
At the scheduled starting time the door(s) to the exam room should be closed. The lead proctor should begin reading the instructions aloud to candidates. Departmental policy regarding the handling of late arrivals should be followed.

Leaving the Room
Candidates should only leave the exam room to use the restroom. Candidates should be instructed to raise their hand, and upon being excused to the restroom, give their test materials to the proctor. Only one candidate at a time should be permitted to go to the restroom; however, this may not be possible with a large candidate group. In this case, one proctor should be assigned to each restroom to monitor candidate activity.   Unusually long restroom breaks should be addressed immediately.

Timing the Exam
The proctor should be well aware of the exam and each exam component's timing schedule.
If exam components are timed separately, the proctor should time candidates accordingly using a timing device. Each of the separately timed sections of the exam should be printed on paper of different colors to help proctors determine whether candidates are working on the appropriate exam component.

Warnings may be given at 15 and 5 minutes before exam completion time is called especially when there is no visible clock in the exam facility. Any time warnings should be explicitly detailed in the proctor instructions.

Collecting the Exam Materials
Depending on the number of candidates and the facility, there are multiple methods for collecting the exam materials. Smaller candidate groups can be instructed to bring all exam materials to the proctor upon completion of the exam. With larger candidate groups, the proctor may want to instruct candidates to remain seated. Materials should then be collected from the seated candidates in alternating sections of the exam room.

Either way, the proctor should ensure all materials are appropriately completed before allowing the candidate to leave. Candidates remaining when the exam completion time is announced, should be instructed to put their writing utensils down and either remain seated or line up at the proctor table, depending upon the method used to collect the exam materials. Candidates should be monitored to ensure that they do not make any additional marks on their answer sheets or talk to one another during the exam material collection process.

The proctors must account for all exam material, including all test booklets, answer sheets, and used scratch paper, before leaving the exam facility. To ensure test security collect *all* scratch paper at the end of the exam.

Exam material should never be left near exam room exits, and candidates should never be allowed to examine test material after turning them in to the proctors.

Proctor Report
Proctors should keep a detailed log and/or be required to submit a report detailing any cheating, misconduct, or complaints on the part of the candidates. In addition, proctors should be aware of department policy for handling such circumstances.

Examination Material Security
As a final recommendation, when examination materials are not in use, it is critical to store them in a secure manner at all times.

Conclusion

Proctors hold a great deal of responsibility when administering an exam. As mentioned before, the security, reliability, and validity of an exam can all be compromised if the proctor is not sufficiently aware of or trained in proper exam administration. By following these guidelines for the administration of exams, the potential for systematic error and violations of exam security can be greatly reduced.

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